

Town of Hinesburg
Planning Commission Meeting Minutes
May 25, 2022

Approved June 8, 2022

Members Present: Dan Baldwin, Lenore Budd (via Zoom), James Donegan (via Zoom), Barbara Forauer (via Zoom), John Kiedaisch, Denver Wilson.

Members Absent: Marie Gardner.

(There are currently two vacancies on the Planning Commission)

Also: Alex Weinhagen (Director of Planning & Zoning).

Members of the Public: Connie Kendall.

Denver W. called the meeting to order at approximately 7:02 PM.

1. Agenda Changes

None at this time.

2. Public Comments for Non-agenda items

None at this time.

3. Minutes of May 11 meeting

John K. **made a motion, and** Lenore B. **seconded, to approve the minutes of May 11 as presented. The motion passed 6-0.**

4. Zoning Revisions – energy action items

(continued from May 11 meeting)

a. Discuss any updates from the Affordable Housing Committee and the Energy Committee
Alex W. noted that the Affordable Housing Committee met on May 24 and discussed the revision items at length. He said that ultimately the Committee recommended not requiring the stretch code, since the issues of interest to the Planning Commission will become part of the RBES base code in 2023 (when it is updated by the State). He also said that the Committee is hesitant to recommend the stretch code since the difference in cost between implementing the base code versus the stretch code is currently unknown. He said that Carl Bohlen talked to Brett Grabowski (a local developer), who suggested that builders be required to price out the cost of meeting the stretch code and offer it to homebuyers as an add-on. Alex W. noted that he has not yet heard back from the Energy Committee.

Alex W. also spoke about the new RBES code. He said that there was a public hearing on updates to the code on May 24 and that the new stretch code will be the base code in 2023 and the electric vehicle charging requirements in the current stretch code will become part of the base code with improvements. He said that the new base code seems to satisfy what the Planning Commission had discussed previously.

Lenore B. said that she had reached out to the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) on the impact of implementing the stretch code on housing, but that they did not have the information that the Planning Commission is looking for.

Barbara F. noted that two large developers at recent Development Review Board (DRB) meetings have said that it is easier for them to build solar-ready roofs when they construct houses rather than trying to make accommodations after a house has been built. Alex W. agreed, saying that the best time to make investments is during initial construction.

Denver W. began discussing communication strategies around energy costs for developers and homebuyers. He asked how costs would be communicated by developers to homebuyers if there are no homebuyers lined up at the outset. Barbara F. said that if a development has more than 10 housing units, they'll need to go through an Act 250 review (which is the stretch code), so that this issue would apply to smaller developments. Denver W. said that it would be good to include information about the stretch code if there is a place in the Town's zoning documentation that makes sense. Alex W. said that there is a section in the zoning about energy and green building standards, which would be an appropriate place in the regulations to put this information. He said that there is also a question around what would trigger this requirement and when in the regulatory process it would occur (e.g., as a condition for a subdivision revision approval). Denver W. suggested requiring a calculation of annual heating cost or energy cost for a new house, which would enable the buyer to compare houses. Alex W. replied that he thinks this is feasible.

b. Discuss options – e.g., RBES base code, RBES stretch code, incentive-based approaches
Denver W. said that since the RBES is already required and will be updated in 2023, the Town may not need to take much action. He said that they could require that energy efficiency and cost information be communicated to buyers. Alex W. said that there are simple revisions to the subdivision regulations that they can make, such as requirements around home orientation and lots within a subdivision for solar readiness. He said that they could also include content in the energy and green building standards of the zoning regulations.

Barbara F. noted that when asked at a DRB meeting about facing roofs for solar, one developer said that any roof could be modified to face solar regardless of the home orientation. She also asked how they will reach net zero by 2050 if builders are not required to meet requirements to reach net zero. Alex W. replied that the RBES code will be updated every 3 years until 2030 so that net zero will be the requirement for new construction.

James D. said that the State is tightening requirements for the RBES, so it seems that the Planning Commission does not need to do much on its own.

Lenore B. asked how the existing regulations deal with a house that doesn't need solar, such as a very insulated house with biomass heating. Alex W. replied that the solar energy would be used for more than heating—it would be used to generate electricity to charge electric vehicles and run other appliances. Denver W. said that it does not seem like a large burden to have space on a roof reserved for solar panels.

Dan B. asked about lots that are in dense woods that don't get much solar exposure. He asked whether there would be clearing that would need to occur, or zoning regulations about building in very wooded areas (in addition to what is already in the regulations). Denver W. said that there are exceptions in the code for areas with little solar exposure. Alex W. said that dense woods should not be an issue for new homes, since they usually obtain large enough yards for some kind of solar exposure.

5. Rural Residential 1 District Zoning Revisions

a. Review buildout potential of various options on sample properties

Alex W. presented a sample property belonging to Connie Kendall as an example of a Mount Pritchard area property. He noted the location of Route 116 on the west side, Pond Road on the east side, Dynamite Hill Road, and Mount Pritchard Road. He noted that Ms. Kendall's property is currently undeveloped. He showed where the primary resource areas are located on the property, which consist of very steep slopes, wetlands, and stream setbacks. He showed where the secondary resource areas are located on the property, which consist of moderately steep slopes, core wildlife habitat, and deer wintering areas. He noted that the entire property is within core wildlife habitat and deer wintering areas. He then showed where some potential developable areas on the property could be, which avoid the primary resource areas and minimize impact on the secondary resource areas. He walked through how options discussed at the previous meeting would impact Ms. Kendall's property. He said that in Option 1 (existing RR1 zoning), it would allow for 28 units based on maximum density of 1 unit every 3 acres (pending DRB review). He said that in Option 3, they would apply the current RR2 density to this portion of RR1, which would allow for 8 units (1 unit every 10 acres), and which would be guaranteed. He said that in Option 4, they would double the density for the RR2 district, which would allow for 17 units. Alex W. said that the ability to get to the western part of the property is limited due to lack of access and numerous steep slopes. Ms. Kendall agreed, saying that access is severely limited by topography. She said that she liked Option 4 or Option 6, and does not like the option that would mirror RR2 zoning requirements (particularly the density allowance). Alex W. asked if the density allowance would work for her if there were other additional allowances in place for the seasonal nature of her proposed plans (seasonal rental cabins). She said that she would still prefer Option 4 or 6.

Alex W. then presented a sample property belonging to the Russell Family as an example of a Lavigne Hill Road area property. He noted the portions of the property that are in the Village Growth District and the RR1 district. He noted that residential development is not possible, as the property is being conserved. He said that the RR1 portion of the property is 68 acres. He showed the primary resources on the property, which consist of steep slope areas and stream buffers. He showed the core wildlife habitat areas within the property. He noted areas with prime agricultural soils. He showed where development areas within that portion of the property could be. He said that in Option 1, zoning would allow for 23 units, in Option 3, it would allow for 6 units, and in Option 4 it would allow 14 units. He also noted that a Planned Unit Development (PUD) approach would be well-suited to this property, since it has some constraints for which it could be granted waivers and additional flexibility.

Alex W. then presented a sample property belonging to the Upper Rec Fields at CVU, which is a separate parcel, to show what the options could mean for an area in the RR1 district that is neither in the Richmond Road area nor the rural areas like Mount Pritchard. He noted the upper field on Pond Road and that the property is on its own 18-acre parcel. He noted a stream that bisects the property east-to-west. He noted that there aren't many steep slopes, but that there are some moderately steep slopes. He said that the entire property is constrained by prime agricultural soils. He said that any design on this property would need to minimize impacts to agricultural soils. He said that because this property is within the area that had previously been discussed as the "remaining" portion of RR1, under the current zoning, the maximum is 6 units (and would be the same under the other options).

Alex W. then presented a property that is situated in the Richmond Road corridor, on Richmond Road. He said that it is located near the Orchard Commons neighborhood. He said that there are no primary resources on the site and there are very few secondary resources (the majority being moderately steep slopes and prime agricultural soils). He displayed the potential development area in the property, which covers most of it. He said that under Option 1, the maximum number of units would be 8. He noted that

under Options 5 and 6, the maximum number of units (if all single-family homes) would be 8, 16 (if all two-family homes), or 34 (if multi-family homes). Lenore B. asked if in Options 5 and 6 could contain a mixture of single- and multi-family homes, and Alex W. replied that yes, it could. James D. asked about the rationale for allowing greater density for duplexes and multi-family units. Alex W. replied that it would provide more housing while decreasing impact. James D. said that suggested reducing the density for single-family homes from 1 to something larger, and accordingly increase densities for duplexes and multi-family homes.

Lenore B. asked if they need to consider the impact of density increases on vehicle traffic and safety. Alex W. replied that they have thought about this in the Village area, since they want to increase density and this also increases traffic. He said that they typically approach this by assessing the pinch-points/intersections through which traffic would be flowing, to gauge whether there are structural problems that greater development would create. He said that if they conducted upzoning in the Richmond Road corridor, they should reach out to the CCRPC for feedback and technical assistance from transportation planners.

6. Other Business & Correspondence

a. News, announcements, etc

Alex W. said that the Selectboard approved and adopted the Village Growth Area design standards, but that there has been some confusion about the 1.5 story height requirement by some members of the public. He said that he will put together clarifying language to assure people that single-level living is still allowed within the regulations.

b. Agenda items for the June 8 meeting

The Planning Commission will plan to discuss energy regulations and continue its RR1 discussion at the June 8 meeting. Alex W. also noted that they should revisit the river corridor topic at some point over the next several months.

Denver W. **adjourned the meeting at approximately 9:20 PM.**

Respectfully submitted,
Amy Coonradt, Recording Secretary